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GEOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE AND MAPS

(INCLUDING ACCESSIONS TO THE LIBRARY)

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

(The size of books is given in inches to the nearest half inch.)

NORTH AMERICA

Forest Physiography. Physiography of the United States and Principles of Soils in Relation to Forestry. By Isaiah Bowman. xxii and 759 pp. Maps, illustrations, appendix and index. John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1911. $5. 9½ x 6½.

This is an admirable work and fills a gap in American geographic literature that has been hitherto quite unbridged. Six hundred of its 700 odd pages are occupied by a description of the surface of the United States from a physiographic point of view. The entire country is covered and the treatment is detailed enough to give a good picture of the land forms prevalent in its every region. All the important original sources have been drawn upon and descriptions compiled from a careful analysis of their contents. These analyses are excellent, as may be seen from the following example:

"The Aquarius, the grandest of all the High Plateaus, is about 35 miles long, of variable width, and 11,600 feet high. Its summit is clad with dense spruce forests sprinkled with grassy parks and exceptionally beautiful lakes. These are not small pools but broad sheets of water from 1 to 2 miles long. Their existence is due to differential erosion by local glaciers that originated in the higher portions of the plateau. Eight thousand five hundred to 9,000 feet was the lower elevation of the glaciers of the region and it is at this level that the terminal moraines are usually found. The high elevation of the Aquarius Plateau, 10,500 to 11,600 feet, favored the exceptional development of glacial forms in the Pleistocene, just as to-day it favors a greater rainfall and better forest cover than occur on the neighboring lower plateaus.

"The upper surface of the Aquarius is developed upon a 1,000 to 2,000 foot layer of basalt, which gives rise to marginal cliffs of exceptional height and steepness, as on the northwestern flank. Again, on the eastern border, a great wall from 5,500 to 6,000 feet high overlooks the lower country and owes its boldness largely to the hard lava cap at the summit." (p. 263. There are two references to Dutton's High Plateaus.)

Of course this represents a great amount of labor, but it has had its fruition in the only complete account of the surface of the whole country that exists in any such detail.

The author has attempted to steer a middle course between "purely descriptive writing and * * * altogether explanatory writing." The reader is evidently supposed to have had a good course in physiography—the explanatory science of land forms,—for in the first ten pages of the physiographic part occur such technical terms as tectonic, dissected fault scarp, antecedent, peneplain, horst, tilted block structure and glacial cirques. Bowman's work makes no pretence to be an exposition of the science; it merely uses physiography for description.

The title of the book is misleading, therefore; it has the merit of being brief and distinctive. No other book has this name, and it has something to do with forests in that it is designed for the author's "forestry" students at Yale. It was obviously this aspect of the work that led to the inclusion of the hundred pages on the nature and origin of soils, as this is lacking in the text books of physiography, and students of forestry need it. If a title should tell what is in a book, this one would read "A physiographic description of the United States, with an introductory chapter on soils." "Forest Physiography" is certainly much handier.

The work appeals to all geographers and geologists, and all of them who have made contributions to our knowledge of American physiography will find their work utilized here and properly credited. It appears to be a special feature of the index that it includes the names of all authors cited for however slight a work. It thus serves as an analytical bibliography of the subject-matter. Such a work is not supposed to be read continuously but rather by parts, on reference. Nevertheless, the book is eminently readable.

Necessarily, some features described are still of disputed origin, but Bowman puts the emphasis on the nature of the features. His references make it easy for a reader who wants the opposing views to find them. For the nature of the Great Lakes country, for instance, there is no account for the general reader at all comparable to this.

The publishers will doubtless correct a number of misprints, in another printing, and refer more clearly to the Plates. The author is to be congratulated on having produced that not too common thing, a good and useful book.

MARK JEFFERSON.

Natural Vegetation as an Indicator of Possibilities of Land for Crop Production in the Great Plains Area. By H. L. Schantz. *Bulletin* 201, Bureau of Plant Industry, Washington, 1911.

Dr. Shantz's Monograph is designed primarily to aid settlers on the High Plains in judging the agricultural values of soils by the native vegetation. In this region of light rainfall practically all other soil factors are subordinate to moisture conservation, and the native plants that show a soil receptive to and retentive of moisture are indicative of the best types of agricultural lands.

Three plant groups or "associations" are described, the short grass, the wire grass and the bunch grass. The short grass with a shallow root system indicates a compact loam or "hard land" into which rain cannot penetrate deeply. Although a fertile type in humid regions, this soil is not favorable for ordinary crops in years of average rainfall.

The wire grass indicates a sandy or sandy loam soil which readily allows the penetration of rain and by its fine surface mulch conserves the soil moisture. Such a soil is too heavy to blow readily and yet is porous enough to contain an adequate moisture content.

The bunch grass is characteristic of the sand hills. It is also found on loamy ridges, on clay areas and along streams where the active soil creep breaks up the soil and makes it pervious to rain. This type also indicates soil that has a favorable moisture content.